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Chairman: Mr. de Rojas ..... (Venezuela)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

1. The Chairman, after welcoming the Secretary-General, and thanking him for taking the time to address the Committee, briefly recalled the background to the Agenda for Development, saying that it was time, now that the substance had been defined, to proceed to the implementation phase. The relationship between that initiative and the reform of the Organization was clear. For that reason, international economic cooperation featured prominently among the various reforms which the Secretary-General had proposed and it was no accident that the subject had been discussed at length, in the meetings of the Second Committee, by the heads of the Executive Committees established to deal with development and other matters. The statement which the Secretary-General was about to make would be the culmination of that new process.

Statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations

2. **The Secretary-General** recalled that after a protracted and sometimes frustrating negotiation process the Agenda for Development had been adopted almost *sotto voce*; its adoption (A/RES/51/240) was, nonetheless, a very significant accomplishment. Politically it meant that all groups of countries, notwithstanding their differences, were united in wishing to provide the international community with a common framework that would serve to reaffirm the centrality of development and to guide a renewed effort to spread and share the benefits of development. Substantively the adoption of the Agenda reflected an emerging consensus on what constituted development in the new international environment. It confirmed that international development was based on solidarity and partnership rather than on competing interests and that, while individual countries were ultimately responsible for their own development, their efforts could only succeed within a multilateral framework that spread the benefits of globalization as widely as possible while minimizing its risks and costs.

3. The Agenda was notable for its unprecedented scope and high complexity. The policies and measures it embodied covered the whole spectrum of economic and social development and provided a link between humanitarian interventions and development. The Agenda was also rooted in a recognition that development required a comprehensive and integrated approach. After all what would be the significance of economic growth if it benefited only the rich? What would be the point of international development cooperation in the face of increasing barriers to trade and declining commodity prices? The Agenda encompassed policies and measures for action by Governments and by the international community, including the United Nations system, thereby highlighting the interactions between national policies and the international environment most conducive to growth and sustainable development.

4. Those characteristics also defined the three main challenges that would have to be faced in order to implement the Agenda. First, it would be necessary to reconcile priority-setting with the need to pursue simultaneous actions on several fronts. At the national level, while it was the prerogative of each country to set its own priorities and to choose its own path to development, that must be done taking fully into account the internal and external forces that impacted on such priorities and that were critical to their success and with a sense of responsibility as to the effects of such choices on the international environment since, in a globalizing world, one country's choices affected the destinies of all. At the level of the United Nations system, facing the challenge implied a new approach to inter-agency coordination, one that placed a premium on a more clear-cut division of labour. That improved distribution of responsibilities must, in turn, stem from a common strategy and a clear perception of common challenges requiring mutually reinforcing interventions and concerted programming.

5. The second challenge was one of political will in sustaining the principles of partnership and solidarity. It was becoming increasingly clear that the future well-being of humankind would depend on the courage of its leaders and their ability to grasp the full meaning of interdependence and to translate it into practical actions. Solidarity remained a crucial pillar of international cooperation. It was therefore necessary to strengthen its economic and its moral underpinning by forging new alliances in the context of expanding markets, while at the same time creating hope and opportunity for the millions of people who were as yet excluded from the global economy. To that end it would be necessary to reverse the decline in official development assistance and to explore new ways of financing development. At the same time the Agenda for Development served as a reminder that no one could afford to stand still. Global forces continued to impact humankind and institutions, redefining the framework for international cooperation and bringing positive as well as negative consequences on a scale never before experienced. The boons of expanded trade and investment and of higher standards of living for millions of people contrasted with the ills of widening income gaps, environmental degradation and illegal drug trafficking.

6. The international community's ability to muster the political will to respond to those challenges would have a decisive impact on the implementation of the Agenda. It would have to establish effective supportive frameworks so as to spread the benefits of globalization more widely, while at the same time avoiding backlashes. Conscious of his responsibility, as Secretary-General, to suggest ways of addressing the complexities inherent in development and sustaining international solidarity in the implementation of the Agenda, he said that he would spare no effort to mobilize Governments, the business sector and civil society. Above all – and that brought him to the third challenge – he would endeavour to reform the Organization and the entire United Nations system.

7. Reform must be based on a clear-headed process of assessing the patterns of change that affected the environment in which the United Nations operated, defining institutional strengths and building on them, and refining roles and refocusing activities around key priorities, with the promotion of development foremost among them. The challenges facing the Organization and the system in implementing the Agenda for Development were indeed the same as those outlined in the reform programme. The objectives of unity of purpose, coherence of efforts and agility set out in the reform programme were also the prerequisites for equipping the Organization to respond effectively to the demands of the Agenda for Development. Among the main institutional strengths of the United Nations were of course its universal character and comprehensive mandate, which made it a unique and indispensable forum and gave it a normative capacity which, in the development sphere, assisted directly in the implementation of national policies and was further supported by the operational capacities of its funds and programmes. Most of the proposals embodied in the reform programme were directly related to the Organization's capacity to respond effectively to the requirements of the Agenda for Development.

8. The General Assembly had a crucial role to play in that regard. The reform programmes relating to it were relevant to enhancing its capacity to steer the actions of Governments and of the United Nations system towards a more effective implementation of the Agenda for Development. The reform proposals aimed at refocusing the work of the Assembly on the priority issues and incorporating in its methods of work the principal features of recent United Nations conferences. The Assembly should examine as a matter of priority the issue of "international financing for development", which went to the core of the Agenda for Development. The Second Committee had already put forward its own proposals regarding the renewal of dialogue on strengthening international cooperation for development based on partnership, which was one of the principal vehicles for implementing the Agenda for Development.

9. The proposed new management structure was based on the concept of a single secretariat which would encompass secretariat departments as well as the secretariats of the programmes and funds. Out of the four sectoral executive committees, two were devoted to economic and social affairs and development cooperation, and were thus geared to guiding the Organization's response to the requirements of the Agenda. The functions envisaged for the proposed new post of Deputy Secretary-General and the establishment of a strategic planning unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General were also highly relevant. The consolidation of different secretariat entities in the economic and social field into a single Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the establishment of a substantive secretariat of the Economic and Social Council and a better division of labour between UNCTAD and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs should all enable the Organization to act more effectively in support of macroeconomic coordination and development. Review of the respective roles of the new department and of UNCTAD in the macroeconomic area led to the conclusion that beginning in January 1999 the world's economic situation and prospects should be dealt with in a single United Nations report on that subject, which would be produced jointly by the services of the Organization in New York and Geneva. The new department and UNCTAD would seek to spread the benefits of globalization; their action would be supplemented by a strengthening of the United Nations Office in Vienna, whose function was to combat the negative effects of globalization, such as drug trafficking and transnational crime. The Organization was also seeking to increase its capacity to help redress environmental degradation and support sustainability in relation to both the natural environment and human settlements.

10. Certainly, the success of the Agenda for Development would depend on tangible implementation of the intergovernmental agreements in the field. The establishment of the United Nations Development Group and the principle of a single United Nations Development Assistance Framework should contribute to bringing different activities at the field level into a coherent and dynamic whole. The decisions taken to consolidate the work of all funds and programmes under the supervision of the Resident Coordinator and to establish common premises of the United Nations were in keeping with the principle of sharing administrative systems and services at the country level. Furthermore, the recommendation on the establishment of

an Office for Development Financing should contribute to the substantial increase in resources for operational activities called for by the Agenda for Development. The "development dividend" was also geared to strengthening the Organization's capacity for direct support to countries in their development efforts. With regard to the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary machinery, he had made recommendations which he hoped would assist member States continue the review of their functioning they had undertaken. For example, the Economic and Social Council should fully exercise its role as the overall coordinating body of all United Nations development funds and programmes. Civil society had an important contribution to make to the implementation of the Agenda for Development. The Second Committee, like the Economic and Social Council, should continue to engage civil society in intergovernmental deliberations.

11. The reform processes under way in the various organizations of the system needed to be concerted, so that the new orientations and structures that were emerging from them were mutually reinforcing and also strengthened the overall capacity of the system to implement the Agenda for Development coherently. The idea of establishing a high-level commission to review the constitutional instruments of the specialized agencies and prepare for the Millennium Assembly was informed by the same objectives. Cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions was an important part of efforts to enhance the system's efforts to implement the Agenda for Development. That Agenda had been adopted by the General Assembly less than six months ago. Its implementation had just begun, and would require strenuous efforts, above all in three directions: dealing effectively with the scope and complexity of development problems, demonstrating political will and carrying out the necessary reforms.

12. What was needed now was to decide on the reform proposals he had put forward.

13. **The Chairman** thanked the Secretary-General.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.